

Following Up With Solutions We Proposed At Minister's Town Hall – MMA

By CodeBlue | 23 February 2023

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Various issues affecting the public health care system and its workforce were voiced out and solutions were provided at the town hall session held with the Ministry of Health (MOH) in Putrajaya yesterday.

The town hall, where the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) was part of the secretariat, was attended by almost 400 doctors working in the public health care system.

In the no-holds-barred session, house officers, medical officers (both contract and permanent), specialists, and consultants spoke freely about their issues. We wish to thank health minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa and her deputy Lukanisman Awang Sauni for agreeing to the townhall session,

which was proposed by the MMA when we met with her in December last year soon after she took office.

While many of the issues cannot be resolved overnight, however, the town hall was a good start. The minister displayed a willingness to engage with health care workers, and to listen to and understand their issues.

She has promised that no action will be taken against any doctor. This is important if we are to move forward and towards more meaningful improvements in the health care system.

We also appeal once again to both the Ministry of Finance (MOF) and Public Service Department (JPA) to give the MOH support, as many of the issues are not for the MOH alone to address.

Additional funding and creation of posts will be needed to resolve the human resources issues we are faced with. We understand from our meetings with MOH that the minister has been in close engagement with both the MOF and the JPA.

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Under human resources, financial matters (long overdue on-call claims and salary revisions), exploitation (bullying, working hours, wage theft, etc.), as well as issues affecting contract doctors and junior doctors, subject matter experts, and specialists were brought up. The MMA also highlighted the need for transparency in MOH data.

Under facilities and Infrastructure, MMA highlighted the need for proper development and maintenance of both physical and digital infrastructure.

Standardisation and proper maintenance must be insisted upon to prevent a collapse of electronic record systems. There is also a need for transparency in assessments of facilities. Reports on the fire at Hospital Sultanah Aminah in Johor Bahru should be released to the public.

The MMA has presented solutions to each of these issues and will be following up with the MOH on their progress.

Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai is the president of the Malaysian Medical Association.